



Islamic State's Media Strategies for Female Recruitment

by

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Glossary

1. **Da'ish** or **Daesh** – The term is based on the Arabic letters which form the acronym of the group's pre-June Arabic name, al-Dawlah al-Islamīyah fī al-‘Irāq wa-al-Shām.
2. **Fitrah**- is acting in accordance with the natural pattern on which Allah made mankind and urged them to follow, so that they will be better and more perfect.
3. **FTF**- Foreign Terrorist Fighters
4. **Hijrah**- The migration of the Islamic prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina
5. **ISIL** – Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.
6. **Jihad** - a holy war waged on behalf of Islam as a religious duty; also : a personal struggle in devotion to Islam especially involving spiritual discipline
7. **Mujahid** – The one who struggles; a person engaging in jihad.
8. **Umm** - Mother

Introduction

“The choice for mankind lies between freedom and happiness and for the great bulk of mankind, happiness is better.” – George Orwell, 1984

In light of the prevalent issue of global terrorism today, the notion of women participating in terroristic activities still confounds many. Vast research has been conducted to analyze the underlying reasons for this phenomenon. This research is also an attempt to understand women’s involvement in terrorism; particularly the process of recruitment itself. Although the premise of the research is based on women’s recruitment by ISIL, the primary objective is to determine the marketing model (ISIL) utilizes to disperse its propaganda, as well as the language used by the female recruiters to encourage other women from the West to join.

The notion of ‘doublethink’ that is exemplified in George Orwell’s quote from 1984 is relevant to the topic of inquiry in the way in which it conveys a sense of malevolence. ‘Doublethink’ can be applicable to the issue of female recruitment and participation in (ISIL) terror group, because (ISIL) is renowned for keeping non-Muslim women as sex slaves, yet there have been many Muslim women who have joined the group, despite of that fact. Perhaps what allows for this ‘doublethink’ to manifest is (ISIL’s) promise to those women that they will be part of a family, a sisterhood. This promise raises questions about the motivations behind joining (ISIL). Thus, we might ask: Do women join (ISIL) simply because they were manipulated or coerced on false promises, or are those women capable of violent behavior just as much as men?

However, I believe that these motivations do not simply manifest without external prompting. Therefore, in order to attempt to answer these questions, certain contributing factors that lead to recruitment must be taken into account. The primary contributing factor

that I will examine is a marketing technique called faith-branding and its potential impact in recruiting women. I contend that (ISIL) is utilizing this technique to garner support. For the purpose of this project, I am going to primarily focus on the main factors that influence women recruitment, although I am also going to analyze secondary factors. Regarding the secondary factors, they will serve to provide a more complete understanding of the recruitment process. The secondary factors that potentially influence women from the West to join (ISIL) include the psychology of the recruited, their socio-cultural background, and most importantly, the way in which gender roles are exploited by (ISIL) to appeal to those women from the West. The aim of this research paper is to have a clear understanding of the process by which women are recruited, in order to determine the best possible policies to mitigate the process.

Literature Review

The unprecedented growth of the Islamic State (ISIL) terror group has attracted sympathizers either through the use of propaganda, or through deliberate exploitation of gender roles. There's a tacit consensus that men are more inclined to join terrorist organizations because of their tendency to be violent. However, women participating—whether proactively or through coercion—stirs inquiry due to the presumed gender stereotypes that are attributed to women. Since the rise of (ISIL) there's been a proliferation of women joining the organization. Most of the previous scholarship related to terrorism and cult recruitment indicate patterns of deception and indoctrination. Conversely, employing faith-based marketing to recruit women from the West distinguishes (ISIL) from other radical groups.

To address the radicalization process involved in recruitment; first, a definition for radicalization should be provided within the context of terrorism. According to Borum's 2011

study, titled, 'Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories,' he defines radicalization as "the process of developing extremist ideologies and beliefs" through dynamic processes that remain ambiguous. The term radicalization is not restricted to the context of terrorism and terrorist activity. The study goes on to state that the term can also be applicable outside of the context of terrorism. For example, organizations such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) are perceived to be radical in terms of their use of publicity on social media. Therefore, to provide the proper context and conciseness, I limit the definition of radicalization to a definition that is cited in Borum's study. This definition states, "Extremism can be used to refer to political ideologies that oppose a society's core values and principles. In the context of liberal democracies this could be applied to any ideology that advocates racial or religious supremacy and/or opposes the core principles of democracy and universal human rights. The term can also be used to describe the methods through which political actors attempt to realise their aims, that is, by using means that 'show disregard for the life, liberty, and human rights of others.'" (Neuman, 2010). To prevent the possibility of arousing confusion, the terms radicalization and extremism are used interchangeably in the study. Thus, using one term for the other—as I further get into my analysis—doesn't alter the meaning for the purpose of this project. As I delve into the capstone, I shall clarify the processes involved in radicalization of women in the West, taking into consideration of women as active participants

Prior to such clarification, it is prudent to provide the relevant historical context of (ISIL's) expansion in order to broaden the understanding of the causes, and to illustrate its precedence over the region. That is because having knowledge on the history enables us to address the issue of recruitment of women. The study conducted by Mah-Rukh Ali (2015), titled, 'ISIS and Propaganda: How ISIS Exploits Women,' provides a brief summary on the initiation and expansion of the group. It states, "The group was established in 2004 in Iraq as

a division of Al Qaeda, and was rebranded as ISIS. The founder, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, ruled the Iraqi branch of Al Qaeda for many years. His methods were more brutal than those of Al Qaeda, and often resulted in conflict with its central leadership. He was killed in an American airstrike in 2006, leaving a legacy of well-equipped Jihadi fighters with military expertise on the battleground. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, a cleric born in Samarra in 1971, became ISIS's leader in May 2010.” The quote, then, goes on further to explain that the uprising in Syria against the Assad regime presented (ISIL) the opportune moment to seize the area in order to establish a Caliphate. The key difference of (ISIL) from other Islamic terrorist groups is in its, ostensibly, progressive and tolerant attitude towards women. Indeed, Mah-Rukh Ali’s study describes this phenomenon as an unprecedented occurrence in the history of global jihadism. Regarding (ISIL’s) tactic towards women, especially women residing in the West, the study titled ‘Islamic State: The Changing Face of Modern Jihadism’ and written by Dr. Erin Marie Saltman & Charlie Winter (2014) explains that (ISIL) recruiters are working hard to bridge the gender gap, that there has emerged a limited but growing network of at least 200 female (ISIL) supporters, and these numbers are from Europe only. These female supporters are referring to themselves as “muhajira,” taking the moniker of “Umm,” and they work assiduously to persuade other women to join them. Their ages differ and they are drawn in by a combination of factors: The religious imperative and duty to establish the “caliphate”, the desire to marry, and a need for identity. They have also created women-only brigades, the famous ones known as Raqqa – al-Khansaa and Umm al-Rayan. These brigades are similar to a moral police, who assist in upholding the religious dress-codes or stand at travel checkpoints to ensure men disguised as women don’t cross their borders. This goes to demonstrate that women’s role in the organization is strictly non-military; albeit, they are visible and contributing members.

Indeed, women having such roles are unheard of in any other Islamic terrorist organization. A mere comparison between (ISIL) and Taliban demonstrates this gap. Clearly, (ISIL) is redefining the parameters of jihadism in terms of recruitments, as well as utilization of social media. These endeavours are vital to discuss and expand on because it clarifies (ISIL's) appeal. According to the previous study by Mah-Rukh Ali (2015), the author compares the role of women under (ISIL) administration with the Taliban's. The study conveys that under the Taliban, women were not a "visible part of the society or community," and this is apparent by their lack of involvement and their lack of importance in propaganda and recruitment, respectively. Conversely, (ISIL) differs from Taliban in the way in which it presents women in propaganda. First and foremost, women are part of the publicity that attracts foreign fighters towards the organization, as well as other women. And secondly, (ISIL) heavily sexualizes the women as an object. Furthermore, (ISIL) relies on social media, such as Facebook and Twitter much more heavily than the Taliban and they deliver quality messages through these platforms. Therefore, this demonstrates that by resorting to online propaganda and use of social media, (ISIL) is redefining the parameters of global jihadism.

Referring to the thesis, the central theme of the project is about looking at the impact of faith branding marketing technique on attracting women from the West, as well as conducting a discourse analysis of the tweets written by (ISIL) women. Nevertheless, this analysis is compounded with the nuanced perception of women in terrorism. Moreover, were these women mere victims of coercion and manipulation, or were they actively motivated to join? To address the former notion, first, the elements involved in the recruitment process must be presented. According to the psychological study conducted by J.M Curtis (1993), titled, 'Factors Related to Susceptibility and Recruitment by Cults. Psychological Reports' reveals the general patterns that exist in individuals inclined towards sociopathic behavior. The

framework provided for the psyche of these individuals indicates that the recruitment process involves additional sub-factors:

The first segment of the recruitment process involves the factors that facilitate to the development of a mind susceptible to violence. These sub-factors are divided into three categories, the first of which are the socio-cultural factors, that is to say, the culture and the family environment in which the individual is raised. This includes attitude towards family members, or whether the individual has experienced abuse or neglect within their environment, as well as the lack of social support systems. Therefore, tenuous, deteriorated, or nonexistent family relations and social support systems lead to emotional vulnerability. Curtis J.M explains the consequences of abuse on the self-esteem of the individual by saying, “Abuse and neglect not only decimate self-esteem but create confusion of identity, personal disorientation, disturbances of boundaries, and abysmal neediness.” The second factor is class, or socio-economic factors, which also includes education. Individuals suffering from severe deprivation of basic needs can develop depression which makes them susceptible to coercion. And the third factor is the tendency to abuse controlled substances, which can attenuate critical thinking and decision making. As stated in the Curtis J.M’s study, “Individuals otherwise not easily susceptible might be made more vulnerable to influence and persuasion under the effects of drugs and alcohol (Frank, 1973). Although the precise effects of drugs and alcohol on suggestibility and social influence have yet to be scientifically determined, their use has been associated with disinhibition, poor judgment and decision making, and over-all patterns of passive conformity (Pahnke, 1966).” However, the factors presented here are neither conclusive nor delineating of the women who are attracted to (ISIL). The factors listed above are not exhaustive and do not indicate that the women who join (ISIL) necessarily suffer from any of those factors. Although the factors mentioned are

written within the framework of cult recruitment, it could provide a basis on which to draw parallels for the possible causes.

An important factor that is highlighted in another psychological study by Silke (2010), titled 'The Psychology of Counter Terrorism' posits, in the chapter called 'Understanding Terrorist Psychology,' that a need for identity could be a possible cause for joining terrorist organizations. Within the context of this study, it is important to mention that some women in the West, in this particular instance, Muslim women find themselves struggling between maintaining their Islamic identity while simultaneously integrating to the Western culture. This conflict can generate frustration and confusion due to the different expectations and social roles between the individual's cultural identity and the dominant Western culture, both of which are usually in collision. Evidently, this provides a prime opportunity for terrorist organizations like (ISIL) to prey upon these individuals because, as the study states, they present an absolutist 'Black and White' perspective of the world. Therefore, identity, or lack of belonging to their surrounding environment, could be a reason that women from the West are joining (ISIL). Another facet to this identity factor could be that (ISIL's) narrative towards the role of women is clearly defined, which will be expounded on momentarily.

Besides the aforementioned sub-factors, social media plays a significant role in attracting women. According to the study titled 'Dabiq: The Strategic Messaging of the Islamic State' by Gahmbir (2014), it demonstrates (ISIL's) propaganda efforts to draw people to their cause. Dabiq is a magazine where (ISIL) portrays its victories, social work and spreads its message of creating a Caliphate to Muslims. Besides the magazine, (ISIL) relies on other social media platforms as well, such as Twitter, Instagram, Kik, Ask.fm, VK and Facebook. These media platforms also deliver high quality footage of the events in Syria and Iraq to an audience of millions. Even women recruiters use social media, primarily Twitter and Tumblr, to recruit

other women. One of the most renowned twitter recruiter went by the pseudo name Umm Layth, who used Twitter as a platform to persuade girls to join (ISIL).

Despite demonstrating the methods used by (ISIL), one crucial method has yet to be discussed, which is faith-based marketing. A book titled 'Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age' by Mara Einstein (2008) remarks about the conflict between religion and modernity that is not so antithetical as it might appear. She explains that religion does make use of modern marketing methods to propagate its message. Einstein explains a particular concept called 'Faith Branding' wherein the religious organization brands their message and sells it as a product to compete with the other existing faiths in the marketplace. This notion of 'Faith Branding' can be attributed to the efforts conducted by (ISIL) to spread their message. For example, publishing Dabiq, having their own flag, are all forms of faith-branding done by (ISIL). It is essential to explore this technique further to understand its power over the consumer, in this instance, women from the West.

Bearing in mind the causes mentioned, women in this instance should not be presumed to be mere victims. Indeed there are those who are susceptible, but as Dr. Mia Bloom states in her seminar titled "Bombshell - the Many Faces of Women Terrorists" discusses women's historical role in other extreme organizations, like the Tamil Tigers where women were suicide bombers. What the professor hints at is the propensity of women to be just as violent, perhaps even more so than men. Perhaps notions of nationality and political affiliations are not sole determiners to join a terrorist organization. It is conceivable that women could be joining terrorist organizations to either defy gender roles assigned to them, or embrace it through their role within the organization. For my capstone, I will show how this factor is manifested and will also explore the impact of gendered assumptions in contributing to terrorism.

Women being involved in (ISIL) is an interesting phenomenon and while there have been previous incidences of women joining terror groups, the causes have not been explored from all aspects. As mentioned, the focus of the project will be on faith branding as a recruitment tool, reinforced by the additional sub-factors that contribute to recruitment, as well as the discourse analysis of the tweets. This is to potentially provide a comprehensive framework for a gendered view of terrorism. To achieve this, it is crucial to analyze Dabiq, the tweets made by (ISIL) women responsible for the recruitment process, and the psychological factors that could lead someone to join a radical organization. Furthermore, the exploitation of presumed gender roles in the recruitment process shall be examined to determine whether the roles have an impact. Nevertheless, the primary focus will be about the impact of faith branding technique that (ISIL) is utilizing to recruit women. The use of Dabiq, or selling t-shirts and hoodies are examples of faith branding, whereby religious propaganda is converted to a product. In closing, most literature that exists perceives women as victims of radicalization, failing to inquire whether women have innate violence. This project differs from the prevailing literature by presenting—with evidence—that women can be violent and proactively engage in violence. Most notably, this project will be the one of the few scholarly works that analyzes language in the recruitment process.

Research Question & Methodology

There has been multitude of women from the West joining the Islamic State to contribute to the organization's pursuit of establishing a Caliphate. And because existing literature doesn't discuss women as active participants in terrorism, it generates confusion when women seek out and join radical groups. The victim narrative that is supported in most scholarly literature perceives women from a single viewpoint, as mere victims who lack agency. There must be something drawing these women to join (ISIL), which raises a few questions such as, what drives women to join terror groups? Are they being coerced or proactively engaged in contributing to the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate? Most importantly, the central research question refers to the utilization of faith branding as a marketing technique. The major ones are: Does faith-branding influence women to join (ISIL)? And if so, how?

In order to elucidate on the contributing factors, I have assembled an archive that is comprised of qualitative data, which includes articles about tweets made by female (ISIL) recruiters, a book on faith branding, 15 of (ISIL's) magazines called Dabiq, and various other research papers on women in terrorism. This archive will be primarily used for analyzing the reasons that lead women to join (ISIL).

For assembling this archive, I have resorted to AUA Papazian Library's E-resources database that links to EBSCOhost. The common keywords I typed for the search are, "women and terrorism," "women in terrorism," "women's role in terrorism," and "religion and marketing." I was able to locate most of the articles through EBSCO. I will also refer to *Brands of Faith* by Mara Einstein to explain the model that (ISIL) is basing its propaganda on to recruit women, and followers, generally. And regarding the tweets made by (ISIL) women,

I conducted an image search for the tweets and found websites of news articles that have posted those tweets.

During the amassment of these tweets, two rather fascinating features have emerged: Firstly, the women responsible for the recruitment are referred to as ‘Umm,’ which means ‘Mother’ in Arabic. Therefore, this keyword (Um) is a common name that is used by IS women. Another keyword that is commonly used in these tweets is ‘Muhajira,’ meaning ‘emigrant,’ alluding to the fact that these women are migrating to Iraq. Typing in these words generally provides tweets that discuss about these women because the pages of those female recruiters have been suspended by Twitter.

Besides analyzing the tweets, (ISIL’s) magazines titled Dabiq have been archived to examine the role of women in this organization. Furthermore, the current archive will provide a basis from which to conduct a qualitative analysis regarding the use of the media platforms that have contributed to the recruitment of women. Also, a discourse analysis will be conducted on the tweets made by the women recruiters, to explain the underlying reasons for joining (ISIL). From the present archive, the only reasons that could be derived are religious affiliation and the desire to marry, nevertheless, further motives could be discovered upon additional research. And finally, I will conduct a comparative analysis of faith branding models between (ISIL) and Megachurches to draw a pattern and analyze the impact on female recruitment.

The decision behind choosing tweets made by female (ISIL) recruiters is because, generally, women are more likely to sign up for an organization that has other women (Albert Einstein College of Medicine).

Research Findings & Analysis

Modern terrorism, as it is understood today, is a relatively recent phenomenon. To clarify, the use of the term 'Modern terrorism' began after the culmination of the Second World War. In the modern context, terrorism is defined by its utility and objective, which is to "further a political cause" (Merriam Webster Dictionary). This definition shows that terrorism isn't exclusive to radical religious movements, which is an important distinction to make to disassociate terrorism as only being carried out by religious extremist. Examples of non-religious terrorist groups include the IRA, the Liberation Tiger of Tamil Eelam, Ku Klux Klan, and Animal Liberation Front (ALF). However, it is important to mention that terrorism and radicalism, though having different meanings, feed off from one another, therefore both terms shall be used interchangeably in this research. Of course, there are radical ideologies that do not manifest into violent action. It is important to highlight this distinction, because to define the process of radicalization is to define it with caveats; that radical ideologies do not necessarily manifest into violent action; as exemplified by radical a feminist group called Women's Liberation Front. Therefore, to define a radical group like (ISIL), the definition must appropriately reflect the motivations of and the methods used by the group. For this reason, I resort to Randy Borum's cited definition of radicalization, which is "Extremism can be used to refer to political ideologies that oppose a society's core values and principles. In the context of liberal democracies this could be applied to any ideology that advocates racial or religious supremacy and/or opposes the core principles of democracy and universal human rights. The term can also be used to describe the methods through which political actors attempt to realise their aims, that is, by using means that 'show disregard for the life, liberty,

and human rights of others.” This definition of extremism clarifies the motivations and the degree of violence (ISIL) has resorted to secure its goals. Additionally, this definition provides an insight on the ‘type’ of individual that will resort to extremism.

Despite that there’s a ‘type’ of individual that will resort to extremism, this doesn’t entail that such individuals suffer from poor mental health. On the contrary, Borum states that “Early efforts tended predominantly to focus on the individual level, assuming that the aberrant behavior so prominently associated with the dramatic consequences of terrorism must reflect some mental or personality abnormality. This line of thinking prompted some clinical explanations for terrorism and a multitude of attempts to identify a unique terrorist profile. Forty years of terrorism research, however, has firmly debunked the notion that only "crazy" people engage in terrorism and has yet to reveal a meaningful, stable, terrorist profile.” The reason this fact is stated is to dispense from false assumptions, and attempt to assemble a profile that befits an individual that has proclivities towards terrorism. However, these proclivities are triggered by terrorist organizations through marketing techniques, and for the purpose of my research, I will analyze the way in which (ISIL) utilizes faith branding to market its cause; and more particularly, faith branding that’s geared towards women from the West.

Prior to elucidating the process of faith branding, the origins of (ISIL) should be stated for those who are unaware of the ideological and structural roots which led to its emergence. For this reason, a comparative approach with Al-Qaeda will be provided; also to draw upon the similarities and differences. Before proceeding, it’s important to mention that ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) is also referred to as ISIS (Islamic State from Syria and Iraq) and its Arabic equivalent; Da’ish, or Daesh.

The Islamic State (ISIL) is a Salafi militant organization in Syria and Iraq. Its goal is to establish an Islamic caliphate and expand the territory. The origins of the group goes back to the early 2000s under Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, but became notorious in 2014, under Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi when it began to conquer cities in Iraq and drive out government forces. The group is an off-shoot of Al-Qaeda and shares the Salafi ideological foundations. However, where Al-Qaeda avoided targeting Muslims and focusing its fight with the West, (ISIL) has no qualms from killing Muslim civilians to purify the state. In terms of the structure of the organization, it is suggested Winter (2014), in a study titled, *Islamic State: The Changing Face of Modern Jihadism* that both groups have the ability to restructure and evolve. The study states the Al-Qaeda used to be centralized; “The organization was broadly forged of two structures: al-Qaeda “Central”, based in Afghanistan and a handful of groups led by veteran combatants who had received training in Afghanistan and went on to set up al-Qaeda franchises elsewhere. The US invasion of Afghanistan greatly infringed upon al-Qaeda Central’s ability to function as it hitherto had been. In spite of this, al-Qaeda’s adaptability enabled it to re-structure and continue to exist as more of ‘an extremely diverse and loosely ideological movement emerged, which many continue to call al-Qaeda for lack of a better term.” It is also believed that (ISIL) has a similar capability to restructure and evolve: “If we draw a comparison between the case of al-Qaeda and the current countermeasures (ISIL) faces in Syria and Iraq – namely, air strikes and, perhaps one day, a ground invasion – it becomes clear that we should anticipate a similar ability to re-structure and evolve. We have already witnessed its adaptability in the way it has changed its modus operandi since coalition strikes began in August 2014. Hence, like al-Qaeda before it, IS cannot and will not be bombed into irrelevance.” Other measures where (ISIL) differs from Al-Qaeda, or other Islamic terrorist group, is in its propaganda technique and punitive measures.

In Mah-Rukh Ali's (2015) study, *'Isis and Propaganda- How Isis Exploits Women,'* (ISIL) is compared with Taliban in terms of its use of women in propaganda, unlike the latter, to present itself as liberal and appeal to women. The study states, "Under the Taliban, women were not a visible part of the society or community. Therefore, despite the harsh treatment of women, they were never an important part of their propaganda, although there are some pictures and videos of Taliban police beating women publicly, and video footage of a public execution of a mother of seven, accused of killing her husband. (ISIL) similarly forbids female education and metes out brutal punishment on women who do not meet the dress code. However, compared to the Taliban, there are two significant differences in the way (ISIL) present women in their propaganda. Firstly, women appear in their publicity in a range of guises, whereas Taliban portrayed women in one consistent role. Secondly, (ISIL) heavily sexualizes females as an object." Therefore, women in (ISIL) are portrayed to share different roles, such as the al-Khansaa brigade, which gives them a more progressive image. However, this liberal façade is based on the grounds that women serve an important purpose in Caliphate as mothers, which will be elucidated further on in the research. Moreover, the study implies that using women as part of their recruitment propaganda especially as sexual objects, separates (ISIL) from the rest of the terror groups. Moreover, the study mentions that (ISIL's) propaganda is categorized as 'black', which means that it comprises of false information of half-truths as evident by the condition of those women who end up in Iraq.

The sexualization of women as objects is encouraged through the notion known as 'Nikkah ul Jihad.' This notion, according to Ali's study, "stems from the Tunisian government's war effort against Al Qaeda-linked terrorism in the region bordering Algeria, and became public in 2013." The study explains that the fatwa is controversial in the Islamic world, and suggests that "women should offer themselves as sexual servants to Jihadi fighters. The purpose of this is purportedly to relieve a man of distracting sexual frustration

during times of war. ‘Nikah ul Jihad’ gives a man permission to marry a woman for a week or for a few hours, to have "halal" sex with her, so that he can pursue his Jihadi mission more effectively on the battlefield. In Tunisia, this was reported to have resulted in many women returning home pregnant and carrying diseases having been expected to have sex with 10-20 men.” Therefore, compared with Taliban, Al-Qaeda, or other Islamic terror groups, (ISIL) is distinctive in its sexualization of women because the group endorses the notion of temporary marriages, as well as structures its propaganda—towards women—on the rhetoric of marriage or the promise of marriage to a Mujahid.

Additionally, the study elucidates on the propaganda process by saying, “(ISIL’s) distinct strategy of excluding journalists from their arena to ensure total control over the information differs from the above system by forcing journalists to become solely dependent on (ISIL’s) propaganda. As a result, many media groups, journalists and researchers have adapted new methods and techniques such as monitoring (ISIL) through visiting Kurdish Iraq. However, the fact remains that ten international media today is still partially dependent on the material provided by (ISIL) propagandists. (ISIL) strictly controls the online activities of people living in their areas. Through this method, they successfully control the outflow of any unwanted information from within their territory.” Therefore, where other terrorist groups have been cooperative with journalists, (ISIL) has refused to do so to control the information flow and present its side of the argument on social medias like Twitter and Facebook. As for the punitive measures, (ISIL) has perpetrated public beheadings of Western captives and large commission of foreign fighters. Since (ISIL) is an off-shoot of Al-Qaeda, it has used the latter as an outline on which to model its activities, and develop it. Where Al-Qaeda sought to oust Western invasion, (ISIL) went a step further in its ambition to establish a caliphate.

Now that it is clarified that (ISIL) seeks to establish a caliphate and expand it, this goal serves the basis of the group's recruitment. Muslim women from the West are also targeted on the basis of this goal. In order to achieve this goal (ISIL) has resorted to online platforms to recruit women. Unlike Al-Qaeda, (ISIL's) internet use differs in its high quality content delivery and the quantity at which it is disseminated. The same study lists four main areas of innovation with regards to (ISIL's) use of the internet. Broadly, there are four main areas of innovation, which are: Centralized propaganda, Global dissemination of threats, Developing New coding and Apps, and Decentralized Messaging. Furthermore, the study draws on similarities between Al-Qaeda's use of the Internet and (ISIL's), by stating that, "(ISIL) has a number of official outlets that produce propaganda videos and publications. However, it has raised the bar when it comes to their circulation and production value – indeed, (ISIL's) centralized network of propaganda disseminators has flourished through online platforms and, accordingly, 'can make a seriously big noise'. Using social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Kik, Ask.fm, VK and Facebook, the network delivers a high definition IS view of events in Syria and Iraq to an audience of millions." These platforms serve to provide both a high quality content, and rapid propagation of said content from anywhere around the globe.

Having the power of the internet at their disposal—until 2015—(ISIL) was able to recruit an estimated number of 600 Western women, according to time.com. The query, then, comes down to the processes involved that encourage and motivate Western women to join. One of the ways in which (ISIL) has been successful is through its marketing the idea of sisterhood to women. As shown in the following tweet:



ام وقاص @_UmmWaqqas · Aug 22

My sisters @UmmLayth_ Umm Haritha & Umm Ubaydiah ♡
(@Al_Khanssaa)

May Allah unite us soon



↻ 43

★ 65



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The tweet begins with the words ‘My sisters,’ which already indicates an existing bond and familiarity between the three women. And the fact that the tweet begins with ‘My’ suggests that those other two women are part of her, as she is for them. This notion of sisterhood is entrenched in the idea of being part of a collective group, when considering the second definition of the word in the Merriam-Webster dictionary. The definition is “a community or society of sisters; especially: a society of women in a religious order.” Therefore, being a sister to one another also implies being in a group. The implication of belonging to a sisterhood also implies loss of some individual identity to maintain the collective. Loss of individuality, at least partly, is revealed in the visual imagery, where the three women are completely covered in the same clothing. That is because physical differences are removed by covering their entire body. Although the women retain their name, which gives some autonomy to their individual identity, they still share the same title ‘Umm.’ This title grants them all an equal status, as well as denotes their position and role in

the Caliphate. Therefore, it is possible that the covering and the title is a means to diminish differences in order to sacrifice the individual for the sake of maintain the collective.

Following the tagged names of the other two women, there is a small heart emoticon, which is a gesture of love and friendship she shares with them. Additionally, she ends the tweet with ‘May Allah unite us soon.’ It is interesting that Umm Waqqas chose to use the word ‘Allah’ instead of God to refer to the deity. It is possible that she used the Arabic name for God to distinguish the Islamic God from the Christian in order to show her allegiance to her religion.



Starting a tweet with ‘But to be honest’ is a propaganda strategy because honesty entails that she (Umm Obeida) is uttering the truth; and most ideologies claim to know the truth. Also, it can also be presumed that this tweet is a response to someone, seeing as it starts with a conjunction, to contrast what has been said. The other word, ‘Wallahi’ in this context means ‘I swear,’ which suggests that she is speaking the truth, and also attempting to rouse emotions from the reader. She is also marketing the idea of marriage to a Jihadi fighter as being a virtuous endeavor, which is evident by the use of the word “Khayr” that translates


from Arabic to mean good. The switch to the Arabic word “Khayr” is intentional, because she could have used the word ‘good deed’ instead. However, using the Arabic word creates an immediate religious association, because the word “Khayr” has been used multiple times in the Qur’an in the context of ‘the best,’ for example, Qur’an verse 8:30 and 3:110 denote this meaning. Therefore, marriage to a “Mujahid” is the best deed a Muslim woman can do, and it is a devious way to link the action of marriage with the Qur’anic notions of “Khayr.” Moreover, the word “Mujahid” means “to struggle for Allah,” but using the English translation probably doesn’t communicate the complete meaning. As for the ending, writing “it’s beautiful” as a follow up to “I wish I could explain the feeling,” is an attempt to reinforce the idea of marriage to a Mujahid.



Another method that (ISIL) female recruiters exploit is religious obligation. The tweet above states ‘hijrah is wajib.’ ‘Hijrah’ means ‘to migrate’ and ‘wajib’ means duty or obligation. It’s interesting that the word ‘hijrah’ is used to denote joining the organization, because, as mentioned, the word itself means ‘to migrate.’ However, taken within the context embedded in Islamic history, the word symbolizes the Prophet Muhammad’s migration from Mecca to Medina; the holy city of Islam. Perhaps using this particular word is meant to draw a parallel between the Islamic State and the holy city of Medina, in order to validate the importance and holy nature of (ISIL’s) undertakings.


“Shaam,” or to use the precise name, “Bilad al- Sham” was the name given to the region of Syria by the former Caliphates, which mean “Land to the North.” In modern context, “Sham” refers to Syria. However, choosing to use the ancient name is probably an attempt to delegitimize the modern state and express nostalgia for previous era. As for the part “but yani hijrah is wajib,” it means “but, like migration is a duty.” However, on closer inspection, “yani” means “that is to say” or “means,” therefore, the sentence can also be read as: “Hijrah means obligation,” thereby, imposing a religious duty.

Another interesting wording is the phrase “You know what.” It is as if a way to defy the assumptions the reader might have about the background of those women, since she also mentions that they all went to “uni,” implying that they come from middle class backgrounds. This notion opposes the general assumption that people who resort to terrorism come from poor backgrounds.

 ام وقلص @_UmmWaqqas · Oct 18
If those sisters did indeed leave for Shaam they are more of a man then you are!

Yes, I said it! Sue me

← ↻ 1 ★ 7 ...

 ام وقلص @_UmmWaqqas · Oct 18
You lot always clamp down on sisters who make Hijrah in your cozy homes. HELLO BUT Hijrah is fardh on ALL of us, not just the women ya know.

← ↻ 6 ★ 13 ...

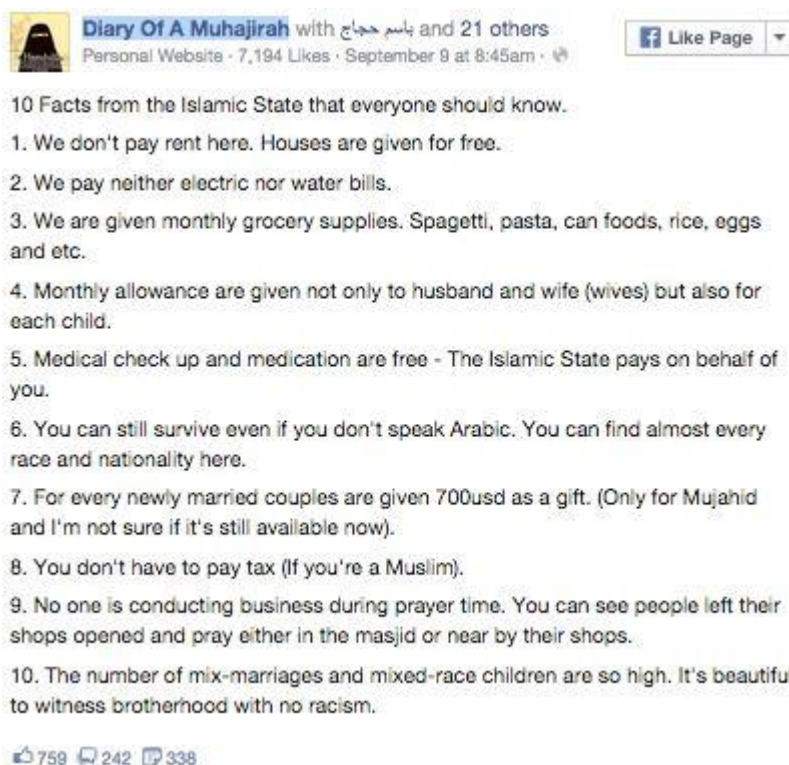
The notion of sisterhood is reinforced in this tweet as well, by referring to other Muslim women as ‘sisters.’ Besides the religious connotations, this tweet makes an explicit statement of religious obligation that should be upheld by all Muslims. The word

“fardh,” which comes from the root word “faridha,” means religious duty or obligation. The first set of tweets end with an exclamation, which can add more weight behind the words since, in this context; it carries a challenging and a loud tone. When she says, “they are more of a man than you are!” she is evidently yelling at the men for not being brave and living up to their masculine role. Instead, this tweet exploits the notions of traditional gender roles to shame men for not being brave and becoming a Mujahid. Furthermore, the tweet is meant to insult Muslim men’s masculinity, since the tweet states that women are leaving for Syria instead. Also, it is implied that insulting a man’s masculinity is somewhat of a taboo, because Umm Waqqas has written “Yes, I said it!” which is a phrase often used to express an opinion that shouldn’t be expressed out loud. She ends the first set with “Sue me,” which is a challenging tone, daring the men to do something in response to what she expressed. And although she takes this challenging and bold role that subverts gender roles, the online platform is probably her only outlet.

The second set of tweets reveals that Umm Waqqas is from the UK, because “you lot” is a slang used in that region. It’s also interesting that the word “Hijrah” here is capitalized in both instances. Presumably, this capitalization is meant to equate migration to (ISIL) conquered territories with the migration that the Prophet Muhammad undertook, to elevate the nature of (IS’) goals. Then, “Hello, but” are all typed in upper-case letters, which means that the person is shouting, as if telling Muslims to ‘wake up.’ And she makes a point of meaning ‘all Muslims’ because the word ‘all’ is written in upper-case letters as well to emphasize on the importance of everyone’s participation; that this must be a collective effort.

The tweets show that all of these (ISIL) women bear the moniker ‘Umm,’ which means mother. They refer to themselves as ‘Umm’ followed by a name. This is a key feature in the findings because not only does it allude to the role these women subscribe themselves to, but it also represents an image of a family. That is to say, the image they’re trying to

invoke is one of joining a new family. That (ISIL) is akin to gaining a new family, where women are the mothers and, presumably, a pillar of strength for the fighters because these women are the caregivers. Hence, analyzing the exploitation of gender roles in future tweets could provide more supporting evidence.



Diary Of A Muhajirah with باسم حجاج and 21 others
Personal Website · 7,194 Likes · September 9 at 8:45am · 🌐

Like Page

10 Facts from the Islamic State that everyone should know.

1. We don't pay rent here. Houses are given for free.
2. We pay neither electric nor water bills.
3. We are given monthly grocery supplies. Spagetti, pasta, can foods, rice, eggs and etc.
4. Monthly allowance are given not only to husband and wife (wives) but also for each child.
5. Medical check up and medication are free - The Islamic State pays on behalf of you.
6. You can still survive even if you don't speak Arabic. You can find almost every race and nationality here.
7. For every newly married couples are given 700usd as a gift. (Only for Mujahid and I'm not sure if it's still available now).
8. You don't have to pay tax (If you're a Muslim).
9. No one is conducting business during prayer time. You can see people left their shops opened and pray either in the masjid or near by their shops.
10. The number of mix-marriages and mixed-race children are so high. It's beautiful to witness brotherhood with no racism.

👍 759 💬 242 📄 338

Besides the religious obligation and projecting notions of sisterhood and family, there is also the financially seductive element to the propaganda. The idea that women will receive financial comfort and are provided for is appealing, and the idea also exploits traditional gender roles. Another aspect of exploiting gender roles is evident in the listing of the advantages that the Islamic State supposedly provides. For example, stating that a “house will be given for free,” and the provision of monthly grocery supplies, and monthly allowance for wives and children. These provisions reveal the underlying notion of the gender role that the Islamic State is promoting. Furthermore, the arrangement in which the items are listed,

conveys the priorities of the tweeter assumes the readers would have a feminine set of priorities

These tweets serve two purposes: The first is the obvious recruitment attempt and the second, which is subtler, is to show that women are visible in the community and serve an active role. Additionally, the al-Khansaa brigade is also an example of women holding visible roles in the community.

This deliberate exploitation of gender roles is also promoted in Dabiq, a propaganda magazine that aims to recruit Jihadists from the West. The name of the magazine, Dabiq, is a town in Northern Syria. In Islamic eschatology, the town is the site where the forces of Rome and forces from Medina will engage war, with subsequent Muslim victory. (ISIL) interprets Rome to mean the forces of Christianity and the West, and them as the forces that will defeat the West. Choosing this name is another attempt at nostalgia, by bringing up mythical stories to appeal to tradition. Mah-Rukh Ali states that Dabiq is “One of the group’s most widely read online publications... Published regularly, it is translated into English, French and German, and therefore accessible to a wide audience. The language is well written, and it contains professional pictures. The magazine is described as appearing sophisticated and visually pleasing. According to reports in al-Monitor, some of the writers in their media divisions are believed to be former journalists who once worked in cities now in (ISIL) control and were presented with two options: to work for ISIS or be killed. The magazine uses Islamic terminology to spread its message, such as tawhid (unity), manhaj (truth seeking), hijrah (migration), Jihad (holy war) and jama'ah (community).” This aspect of community is reflected by the female recruiters appealing to notions of sisterhood.

In its 15th issue, (ISIL) explicitly targets the Muslim women in the West to encourage them to join the organization. The arguments posited by (ISIL) grants the reader concrete

answers in terms of the defined roles of men and women. Unlike the reconstructing of the gender roles in the West, (ISIL) provides rigid parameters and presents the issue within a moral context, which is revealed in this paragraph: “The role of man and woman [in the West] was mixed up, as was the responsibility father and mother had towards daughter and son. Woman need not be a mother, a wife, or a maiden, but rather, she should work like man, rule like man, and have intercourse like an animal, without being conscious of her Lord watching both her and her heinous partner in crime.” (Dabiq, Issue 15)

In this paragraph, (ISIL) explicitly portrays the West as degenerate and implies that such a lifestyle is contradicting to Islam when it states that female’s living that lifestyle threaten their soul. “And as the fitrah continues to be desecrated day by day in the West and more and more women abandon motherhood, wifeness, chastity, femininity, and heterosexuality, the true woman in the West has become an endangered creature. The Western way of life a female adopts brings with it so many dangers and deviances, threatening her very own soul.” (Dabiq, Issue 15)

Then, to present a salvation to the degeneracy (ISIL) resorts to religious mandate of gender roles in the following quote: “The fitrah is also the motherhood and mercy of mother for child,” and “Motherhood entails nursing the child at home, while his father works as the breadwinner and she obeys her husband as his wife.” (Dabiq, Issue 15)

Moreover, (ISIL) goes a step further by placing a burden of religious responsibility to the Ummah in the caliphate (Muslim Community) as mothers. “Still, the absence of an obligation of jihād and war upon the Muslim woman – except in defense against someone attacking her – does not overturn her role in building the Ummah, producing men, and sending them out to the fierceness of battle.” (Dabiq, Issue 11)

Therefore, (ISIL) deliberately plays on the notion of motherhood to attract Muslim women from the West, because motherhood is not only presented as a sacred duty by “building the Ummah,” but also a unit that is actively responsible for the construction and maintenance of the Ummah. This implies that such women hold an esteemed status in the community and there’s a purpose for them in their community. So the idea of purpose and status is tied into motherhood, which can be a reason that women from the west are joining (ISIL). Additionally, it would seem that the status of motherhood itself is tied to son-bearing, when analyzing this quote, “As for you, O mother of lion cubs... And what will make you know what the mother of lion cubs is? She is the teacher of generations and the producer of men.” And “My sisterly advice to you as you are preparing the lion cubs of the Khilāfah is that first comes knowledge, then the weapon. The danger of a weapon without knowledge is great and very rarely does it get things right” (Dabiq, Issue 11) Mothers in Dabiq are addressed as “mother of lion cubs” and defined by their purpose as “teacher of generations and producers of men.” This language shows that the value of motherhood for (ISIL) is tied exclusively to bearing male children.

An additional factor that facilitates the recruitment process is the psychology of the recruited. In ‘The Psychology of Counter-Terrorism’ by Silke (2010), he states that research on the relationship between psychopathology and terrorism has unanimously shown that “mental illness isn’t a critical factor in terrorist behavior.” The study goes on to explain the reason is because terrorists are connected to principles and an ideology while psychopaths don’t form such connections. Moreover, Silke (2010) states that “Research has also failed to find or produce any favorable prospect of identifying either a ‘terrorist personality’ or a psychological ‘terror profile.’” Therefore, to determine the psychology behind terrorism, Silke says that focusing on vulnerabilities gives an insight on the common factors that arise across all terrorists. According to Silke, there are “commonly three occurring vulnerabilities

and they are perceived injustice/humiliation; need for identity; and need for belonging.” In the posted tweets, the need to belonging and identity is apparent when (ISIL) presents women as mothers and shapers of the Caliphate, as well as the community. Silke (2010) goes on to say, “The Absolutist ‘Black and White’ nature of most extremist ideologies is often attractive to those who feel overwhelmed by the complexity and stress of navigating a complicated world.” This notion is highlighted when (ISIL) presents a ‘Black and White’ image of the West that is couched within the argument of gender roles, as previously mentioned.

In order to determine whether women joining from the West are driven by psychological factors, a comparison must be drawn with cult recruitment related factors. Curtis’ (1993) study titled, ‘Factors Related to Susceptibility and Recruitment by Cults,’ lists a few factors that make an individual susceptible to joining a cult. Some of the factors that he lists are: Generalized ego-weakness and emotional vulnerability; Tenuous, deteriorated or nonexistent family relations and social support systems; Proclivities toward or abuse of controlled substances; History of severe child abuse or neglect; and Intolerable socioeconomic conditions.

The first factor relates to individuals who have weak adapting skills, emotional vulnerability, and generally suffer from emotional pain. The second factor relates to strained family relations and lack of filial support system due to a dysfunctional family. The third factor relates to individuals who abuse substances like drugs and alcohol, which makes them easier to influence. The fourth factor creates emotional damage and child abuse leads to low self-esteem, confusion of identity, and makes one needy. And for the final factor, relates to adverse economic conditions like poverty, unemployment, no access to education or training.

However, the factors provided doesn’t necessarily hold true for the women who are joining (ISIL). In a study titled ‘Countering Violent Extremism: Developing an Evidence-

base for Policy and Practice,' it looks at the background of foreign terrorist fighters, which states, "A recent report the London-based Institute of Strategic Dialogue described the 100 known female FTFs in the following words: "It really debunks the stereotypes," said ISD senior researcher Erin Saltman. "The ages range from 13 to 40, with a range of education and professions and families. It's very complicated" (Shubert 2015)" The study goes on to say that the report also holds true for women joining (ISIL) and for the top leadership people in (ISIL) and Al-Nusra. Therefore, at least the stereotype regarding poor people join terrorism is proven to not necessarily be true. On the contrary, as shown in the tweet calling 'hijrah' an obligation, that at least some of these women have families and attend universities, which makes it safe to assume that these women come from middle class backgrounds. As for the rest of the psychological factors, there is not enough evidence to infer whether they are applicable to the women from the West joining (ISIL).

Since psychological factors don't necessarily facilitate recruitment, then what are the motivations that make women join (ISIL)?

The study titled, 'Women in Modern Terrorism: From Liberation Wars to Global Jihad and the Islamic State' by Davis (2017), is compiled of over a decade of dataset to tackle questions regarding women's inclusion in terrorism, as well as their motivation behind joining terror groups. It covers the history of women's involvement since the beginning of modern terrorism and covers both religious and ethno-nationalist terrorism. The preliminary findings for motivations behind joining (ISIL) suggest that "Women and men are largely radicalized and motivated to engage in terrorism for the same reasons. These reasons include personal factors, group grievances, injustices suffered by both personally and by larger societal groups, social networks, and a variety of other factors." Some of the more detailed reasons are already revealed from the tweets, like desire for marriage to a Mujahid, and the religious obligation that is placed upon every Muslim individual towards the Caliphate. To

add to that, Mia Bloom states in a lecture titled, 'Bombshell - the Many Faces of Women Terrorists,' "Women are attracted to the idea of performing their individual obligation to jihad for the Caliphate." This goes to show that women are active participants in terrorism, as opposed to the general perception by society that they are coerced or intimidated. This statement, however, is not a denial of the fact that women are given false promises, as evident by the expressed regret of these women who join (ISIL). An example is of one such regret is a woman called Laura Passoni (Torontosun, 2016), who escaped from (ISIL) and regrets ever joining the group.

Davis also states that, "Two differences do stand out, however, between men and women in their radicalization processes. Women are much more likely to join terrorist organizations where they have a personal connection." This personal connection is manifested by women recruiters referring to other women as 'sisters' to establish familiarity and intimacy with them.

It's already mentioned that (ISIL's) media use is unprecedented through their extensive reliance on social media platforms. Having said that, in order to understand why they have been successful, it's important to look at (ISIL's) the marketing model to be able to provide a clear outline for the technique and the processes involved, as well as to conjure up a solution to counter the marketing model.

'Brands of Faith' by Einstein (2008), describes the process involved in faith branding within Christianity. Faith branding is simply branding a particular belief through the market within the capitalist system. Prior to explaining how faith branding works, Einstein, firstly, defines what a brand is. Simply put, "Brands are commodity products that have been given a name, an identifying icon or logo, and usually a tagline as a means to differentiate them from other products in their category. Branding also occurs through the creation of stories or myths

surrounding a product or service. These stories are conveyed through the use of advertising and marketing and are meant to position a product in the mind of the consumer.” If we apply this definition this with (ISIL), the group fits the description since it has an identifying icon, which is its black Islamic flag that is customized purposefully for the group. Moreover, this flag has become an identifying logo because of the immediate association it creates with the organization. In terms of creating stories or myths, (ISIL) validates its actions and its emergence by claiming itself to be the re-establisher of a Caliphate, within the context of the historical narrative of past glory. Therefore, (ISIL) can be characterized as a brand of its own.

The process is explained as, “Secular objects (books, material goods) are used in disseminating the sacred. The sacred must be promoted via the secular marketplace in order to recruit new members.” (P. 74) One such manifestation of branding are Megachurches, which are presented as commodities within the marketplace. Comparing that to (ISIL’s) strategy in recruitment, which is the intent behind faith branding, is its Dabiq magazine, whereby it presents the group’s activities and goals, similar to a religious pamphlet describing the activities of a particular denomination. And as displayed previously, its content has been successful at recruiting women by invoking motherhood and sisterhood.

In terms of the success of such branding Einstein (2016) states, “Megachurches have embraced popular entertainment forms in their services and widely used marketing techniques to attract the unchurched.” (P. 76) For (ISIL) to gain similar traction, it brands itself by not only through Dabiq, but also through selling t-shirts and hoodies online, perhaps to give off the impression that they are modern, and ‘cool,’ and perhaps to make their ideology more palatable.

In order to understand the process better, the success of Megachurches must be compared with (ISIL’s) attempts at growing and expanding. The process includes

establishing a connection with the brand and its product. Einstein (2008) describes by stating, “Faith brands exist to aid consumers in making and maintaining a personal connection to a commodity product. Introducing, sustaining, and perpetuating the brand across product lines allow these faith brands to be “top of mind” in an overcrowded commercial environment.” The definition that relates to faith brands being on “top of mind” of the consumers can be attributed to TV personalities like Joel Osteen, who is a pastor at Lakewood Church. As for (ISIL), releasing beheading videos to stand out and make people talk about it is similar to megachurch’s use of TV personalities. That is because such videos made headlines, like a CNN (2014) article titled, “ISIS video claims to show beheading of Alan Henning,” which stood out in the sea of other events, and gave (ISIL) notoriety. Therefore, in terms of branding, Joel Osteen is the brand of Lakewood Church as beheading videos are the brand of (ISIL). Moreover, these videos serve to create an association between the acts of beheading and (ISIL) as an organization, to not only brand itself, but to also show strength and fearlessness against the West.

Regarding Megachurches, Einstein states, “When marketing is introduced into a product category—any product category, whether it is churches or tchotchkes—the goal of the institution becomes growth. Marketing-oriented institutions measure success by growth indicators—increases in sales, increases in brand awareness, increases in repeat business. Megachurches have been the focus of much of the discussion to date in regard to religion and marketing, and with good reason: they have to be blatant in their promotion because they target the unchurched—those who do not attend services on a regular basis. Subtler marketing, like billboard advertising or signs in front of a church announcing an upcoming event, can be used to remind people who are already inclined to attend services. But changing someone’s thinking and thus converting a prospect into a user (i.e., moving that person through the relationship curve) requires more sophisticated marketing techniques, which is

exactly what the megachurches use.” Moreover, these churches have resorted to utilizing networks to promote Christian music. For example, Praise TV is such a channel, wherein music videos of contemporary Christian music artists are displayed. Similarly, (ISIL) has promoted itself through its anthem ‘Salil al-Sawarim,’ which translates to Clashing of the Swords.’ This branding has been successful due to the fact that the song has become part of the organization’s identity, and it is catchy and recognizable. MotherJones (2015) cites Pieter Ostaeyen, an independent researcher who has studied jihadi music: “They’re so melodic and so intense that people immediately like the sound.” The fact that people like the music explains the reason for the song’s catchy tune.

Therefore, a possible success to (ISIL’s) recruitment is its capability to brand itself through the mentioned merchandises and the beheading videos, as well as its ability to use stories from Islamic texts to merge them with the group’s aspiration to establish a Caliphate, thereby, giving itself religious and historical roots to legitimize its undertakings.

Conclusion

There’s no single factor to determine the reason behind (ISIL’s) success in recruiting women. But, what is clear is that multivariate processes are involved to make female recruitment a success. The most recurring themes that came up are need for an identity, promoting the notion of traditionally defined motherhood, imposing religious obligation, romanticizing the idea of marriage to a Mujahid, and also bringing up historical narratives to validate (ISIL’s) undertakings, as well as expressing nostalgia of past glory. Moreover, these themes serve as the factors that have contributed to female recruitment by the organization. It’s also worth mentioning that personal motivations are strong factors that facilitate (ISIL’s) desire to recruit women. The latter must be highlighted because from analyzing the tweets, it can be inferred that these women weren’t simply passive subjects in a brainwashing process,

but active participants in their desire to join what they thought would be a religious duty; jihad, and subsequently playing an important role in establishing the Caliphate. Nevertheless, these inferences are merely suggestive and do not represent a definitive conclusion, due to the limited number of acquired tweets. Perhaps possible further acquisition of more tweets will shed light on the concreteness of the presented motivations.

Upon comparison of (ISIL's) marketing model with Christian faith branding, it is evident that the organization's success at recruiting women is partly due to being able to brand itself. This is evident through (ISIL) utilizing social media platforms, Dabiq, through selling t-shirts, creating a catchy anthem, carrying a symbolic Islamic flag, and creating a story for its existence that has deep historical roots in the region. Moreover, this conscious undertaking of the group indicates that (ISIL) is far more sophisticated than it appears to be, which points to the necessity of finding flexible and smart solutions to dissolve a group that is highly effective and intelligent; and to an issue that is far more complex and consequential on the region.

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